

Downrigger Ball Flashers

Downrigger ball flashers are essentially long strings of flashers attached directly to the downrigger ball instead of the fishing line. They are also referred to as 'gang trolls', 'ball trolls', or 'cannonball trolls'. Their job is to attract fish to your downrigger ball where your lure will be close behind. It could be that they attract fish by looking like a school of bait fish. Another theory is that the flashing and vibration attract fish out of pure curiosity. Whatever the reason, the advantage of using ball flashers is that they attract fish to your lure, but they don't hinder the fight once you hook a fish.

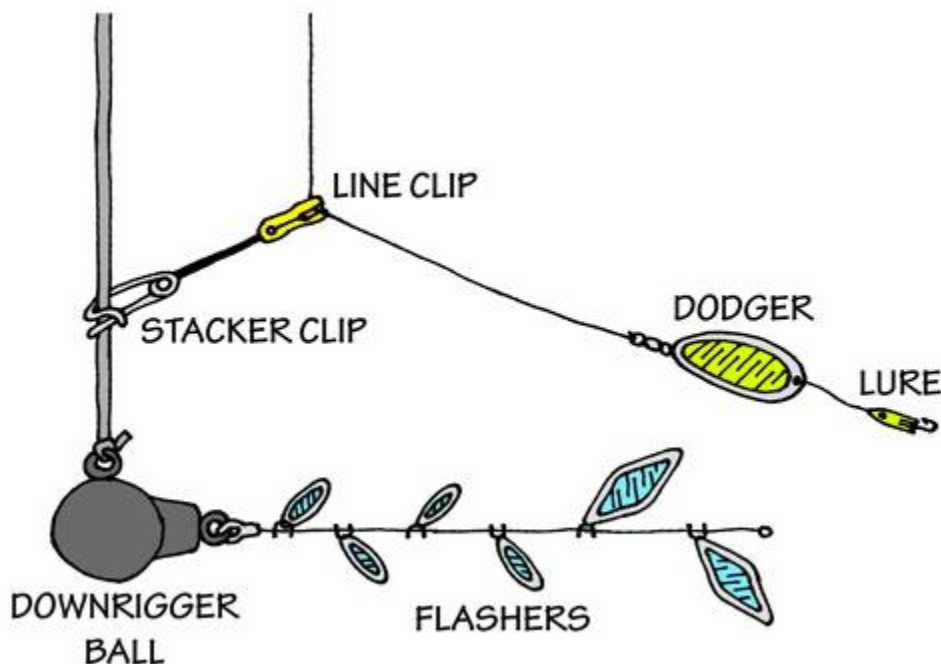
I've had great luck using ball flashers for landlocked chinook salmon, landlocked coho salmon, and mackinaw. I have occasionally had luck with them while targeting kokanee salmon. Trout, on the other hand, don't seem to like them or the short setbacks that come with them. They may be worth a try in really stained water for trout.

Hardware

There are lots of downrigger ball flashers on the market. I have also made my own. I like the polished gold or half gold half nickel setups. I have also added glow-in-the-dark tape to both sides of the blades on some of mine for fishing in the dark (where legal).

Technique

I snap my string of ball flashers directly to the downrigger ball. Once I have it in the water and it looks like it's spinning correctly, I'll fasten my line release about one or two feet above the downrigger ball using a stacker clip.



The trick is to get your line release close to the ball flashers without getting too close. If you get it too close your line will tangle up in the flashers when you lower the ball or slow down to fight a

fish. Too high, and your lure will be too far away from the flashers where the fish are being attracted to.

How to Avoid Tangles

Some people are afraid to use these because the threat of tangles. Just take it slow, and follow this advice:

- Lower the ball slowly so the flashers don't tangle in your downrigger cable or fishing line.
- Make sure that the string of flashers cannot reach your boat's propeller when making sharp turns!
- Keep the boat moving at all times. If you have to stop the boat, pop your line out of the clip so it doesn't sink into the flashers.
- Using short set backs means that fish will be very near the boat once they're hooked. This gives you less time to tire out the fish, so set your drags loose and be prepared to give them some line until they tire out.
- When using two downriggers, make sure that the flasher strings are shorter than the distance between the two downrigger cables. If they are too long, the flashers can tangle in a nearby downrigger cable.
- If you have quick-retrieve downriggers, pull in your line first before bringing up the downrigger ball.

Tips

- Don't be afraid to fish shallow! I've caught fish using this technique with my downrigger ball as shallow as 15' deep. Basically right under the boat.
- If your flashers and set backs are short enough, it allows you to make really tight turns without having to worry about your lines or flashers getting tangled up. This can be a deadly technique when you find a school of feeding fish - just keep making circles and figure-eights back through the same fish.
- Try running a lure without any dodgers or flashers attached. When you hook a fish, there won't be anything between you and the fish. Minnow lures and Apexes are great for this technique.

Resources

[Vance's Tackle Downrigger Tips](#)